

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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| COUNTRY | Korea | REPORT NO. | |
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BY CABLE

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THE APPRAISAL OF CONTENT IS TENTATIVE.
(FOR KEY SEE REVERSE)

25X1 On 6 July 1953 Korean schoolteachers spread a rumor crediting an American observatory with a report that a large comet would collide with the earth about 13 August 1953, resulting in the probable destruction of the earth. The rumor was spread widely and was taken seriously by the people, who are highly susceptible to superstition. One well-educated physician believed the report.

25X1 Comment. The rumor was not acknowledged in the Korean press or radio until the morning of 9 July, when the ROK government issued a denial of the report in the press. The rumor was apparently officially inspired, since President RHEE exerts a tight control of the students through the teachers. Prior to the ROK's official denial, the rumor appeared possibly to be a significant attempt to induce the attitude of desperation and fatalism in the Korean people, who would then be receptive to desperate acts. The date of the impending crisis tied in with reports of a possible ROK Army attack in mid-August.

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